

ceeded in obtaining the head and some wing and tail feathers." The remains I forwarded to Mr. J. A. Allen for comparison and identification, and he pronounces it an undoubted specimen of *Geotrygon montana*, the Ruddy Quail-dove, and the first recorded for North America. I wish here to express my indebtedness to Mr. Allen for this and many other similar kindnesses. I wish also to thank Mr. Atkins who has kindly presented the remains of the Dove in question to me. It is No. 3210 in my catalogue.

*Milvulus forficatus*. SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER.—On December 10, 1888, Mr. J. W. Atkins saw five Scissor-tailed Flycatchers near the town of Key West, and secured two of them, a male and a female. He says "The birds seen to-day were quite shy and were taken at long range." This is, I believe, the second record for the island of Key West, and it can hardly be considered as accidental at that point.



## THE CLAPPER RAILS OF THE UNITED STATES AND WEST INDIES COMPARED WITH *RALLUS* *LONGIROSTRIS* OF SOUTH AMERICA.

BY GEORGE B. SENNETT.

IN 'TABL. P. E.,' 1783, Boddaert described *Rallus longirostris*, based on 'Râle à long bec, de Cayenne,' Buff., 'Pl. Enl.,' 849.

In 1788 Gmelin described *Rallus crepitans* (S. N., Vol. I. pt. ii, p. 713) based on 'Clapper Rail, from New York' (Penn., Arct. Zool., II, 1781, No. 407).

In 1868 (Proc. Zool. Soc., p. 442) Messrs. Sclater and Salvin give an admirable 'Synopsis of the American Rails.' In this synopsis the New York Rail (*crepitans*) is not separated from the Cayenne Rail (*longirostris*) but is made its synonym.

In 1874 Mr. Lawrence described *Rallus crassirostris* (Ann. Lyc. N. Y., Vol. X, Feb., 1874). Mr. Lawrence sent the Bahia specimen, which differed so much from the *crepitans* of our Atlantic Coast, to England and says, "on returning it, Mr. Sclater wrote, 'is true *longirostris*, figured Pl. Enl. 849.'" Again Mr. Lawrence says, "I find it agrees with Buffon's plate (which is of reduced size) in the apparent color of the back, also in the form and stoutness of the bill"; and again, "my specimen differed so much from *crepitans*, as well as from all others, that I considered

it undescribed at the time, taking for a settled fact that *crepitans* and *longirostris* were the same; if the Bahia bird is to take the name of *longirostris*, it being certainly distinct from *crepitans*, the latter name must be restored to full specific rank."

Mr. Lawrence's Bahia bird is now in the possession of the American Museum of New York and is similar to a Cayenne *longirostris* in the National Museum of Washington, and to those in the collection of Messrs. Godman and Salvin.

In 'Bull. Nutt. Orn. Club,' July, 1880, Vol. V, p. 140, Mr. Ridgway makes *crepitans* a subspecies of *longirostris* along with two new varieties, viz., *caribæus* and *saturatus*, revising his *elegans* var. *obsoletus* (Am. Nat., 1874, p. 111) by raising it to the rank of a species, *Rallus obsoletus*. Mr. Ridgway's conclusions were pretty generally accepted by American ornithologists and the United States species were incorporated in the A. O. U. Check-List of 1886.

Since the papers above mentioned were written we have done more systematic and thorough work in field ornithology in the United States than had been previously accomplished. As a result of this field work an immense amount of material, including Clapper Rails, has been added to our collections, both public and private. No larger series of these wary birds has ever been brought to our notice from any special source than that collected by Mr. W. E. D. Scott at Tarpon Springs, Florida, from the fall of 1886 to the summer of 1888. During this time Mr. Scott collected more than one hundred and twenty specimens, old and young, taken in every month of the year. Of this large series all but a few are the new Rail which I very briefly described in 'The Auk' of July, 1888, p. 305, as *Rallus longirostris scottii*. Mr. Scott was on the point of working up this dark Rail when he learned that I intended to determine certain Texas examples of Rails, and he kindly sent me his material with the request that the types go to the American Museum of New York.

A more careful study of all the forms leads me to believe that any ornithologist familiar with the Rails of the United States can readily separate the fresh water or King Rails of the *elegans* group from the salt water or Clapper Rails of the *longirostris* group. Now, given a hundred or more examples of the various Clapper Rails of the United States and the West Indies indiscriminately mixed together, I think there would be no question

but that any ornithologist familiar with Rails would readily select three distinct and well marked species, *crepitans*, *obsoletus*, and *scottii*, all of which are different from the true *longirostris* of South America. Of this promiscuous collection a few might not so easily be determined, but are apparently divisible into three forms; one form is pale in color and is like true *longirostris* except that the bill, instead of being short and thick, is long and slender; the labels show that this form comes from the West Indies and Texas and is the subspecies *caribæus* of Ridgway. Another form is browner than *crepitans*, but not sooty or black like *scottii*; only three of these were taken in one locality in Louisiana in 1869 and were named by Mr. Henshaw in 1880 *Rallus longirostris saturatus*. Since the capture of these three brown birds by Mr. Henshaw, no large Rails other than *crepitans* have been taken along the whole northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The third form is from the Bahamas, with a bill short and straight which in stoutness is about midway between *caribæus* and *longirostris*. In color the faded and worn plumage of the only two specimens thus far taken is lighter than that of any Rail I have yet seen. The type was taken on a Key south of Andros Island, and was named *Rallus coryi* by Mr. C. J. Maynard, in 'Am. Ex. & Mart.,' Boston, January and February, 1887. Another bird which Mr. Cory says is just like the type, has been taken in the Bahamas. It remains to be seen whether this can be established as a well defined race; it varies from true *longirostris* less than any other form now known, and it seems to me can only be classed as a variety of *Rallus longirostris*.

It now appears that the conditions warrant a revision of the North American Clapper Rails. As the result of my investigations I here present the names of the various species and varieties, together with my reasons for such classification.

*Rallus crepitans*. Restored to the rank of species as being the common Atlantic and Gulf Coast form, being both by bill and coloration distinct from true *longirostris*, which has thus far been found only on the Atlantic coast of South America.

*Rallus longirostris caribæus*. In color these birds are like *R. longirostris*; the structure of the bill is however very different, since it is very long, very slender, and decidedly decurved. Five specimens were examined from the West Indies, and it seems to be the form most generally found there.

Two specimens in my collection from Texas, strange as it may seem, are referable only to this form; moreover, nothing like it has been taken in Florida, which lies almost in direct line between Texas and the West Indies. There is nothing in this country nor in England as yet to show the forms of Clapper Rail prevailing along the immense line of coast extending between the United States and Cayenne, South America. As it is not the habit of these birds to migrate over great expanses of land or water, it would indicate that the Texas *caribæus* found its way thither along the southern coast of the Gulf of Mexico; therefore it would be only reasonable to expect that we shall find this form along the entire Gulf coast of Mexico and the eastern coast of Central America.

*Rallus crepitans saturatus*. This brown form was taken in February, 1869, at the Rigolets, near Lake Ponchartrain, a few miles from New Orleans, and was named eleven years later. Three specimens are now extant, all taken at the same place. Two of them (the types), which were in Mr. Henshaw's collection, are now in the British Museum, and the third is in the collection of Mr. Wm. Brewster of Cambridge, Mass. All of them were sent to me for study and comparison. Since these birds were named, efforts have been made at various times to secure others along the Gulf coast of the Southern States, but thus far (with the exception of the pronounced *scottii* of the west coast of Florida) only *crepitans* has been found. I have commissioned a collector to go to the exact place where this variety was taken, and on that spot, at a similar time of the year to look for this variety; but at present writing no Rails referable to this variety have materialized. These three specimens of *saturatus* are wonderfully similar and are entitled to a subspecific classification. Up to the time of finding *scottii*, four immature birds from Charlotte Harbor, Florida, in the National Museum, were referred to this form, but they are exactly like the young of Mr. Scott's series from Tarpon Springs, Florida, and must be considered *scottii*, as no adult *saturatus* has yet been taken in Florida. The birds are brown, very brown, with the edgings more olive brown than gray. The striping on the upper parts, both in extent and color, are about intermediate between *crepitans* and *scottii*. Since late fall and winter specimens of *crepitans* from Georgia and Louisiana are darker than spring or summer birds of the same

locality, or even than winter specimens of Carolina residents, it is probable that *saturatus* is a local form of *crepitans*, the latter the prevailing form in Louisiana.

*Rallus obsoletus*. This is the Pacific Coast form of Clapper Rail and is larger than and quite distinct from any other. The dark cinnamon of its under parts caused it at first to be mistaken for a variety of the King Rail (*Rallus elegans*). No other large Rail is so olive on its upper parts, and the dark streaks on its back are very sharply defined. Its bill is stouter than that of any other form excepting *longirostris* of South America, but is longer and more decurved than that of the latter. *Obsoletus* does not show great individual variation, and is doubtless correctly placed.

*Rallus scottii*. Since naming this bird as a variety of *longirostris* in 'The Auk,' July, 1888, p. 305, I have received more specimens of the several forms of Rails. I have now no hesitancy in raising *scottii* to the rank of a full species. It is so black that it can at a glance be separated from all other Rails, and such numbers have been taken that it certainly can be considered common if not abundant. In all its specific characters it is the most remote from true *longirostris* of any form yet discovered. It is resident where found and shows less individual variation than any form I have seen.

#### ANALYSIS.

*Rallus longirostris* Bodd. Bill straight, short, stout, and square at base; upper parts brown in about equal parts with the grayish olive feather edgings; under parts pale with dull cinnamon on breast; axillars and flanks light brown, sometimes grayish brown. Average size: bill, 2; wing, 5.40; tarsus, 1.75 inches. *Habitat*.—Eastern coast of South America.

*Rallus longirostris caribæus* Ridg. Bill long, slender, decurved, and much compressed at base; colors same as in *R. longirostris*. Average size: bill, 2.40; wing, 5.75; tarsus, 1.85 inches. *Habitat*.—West Indies and Texas.

*Rallus coryi* Maynard. Bill short, straight, not so stout nor square as in *longirostris*, nor yet as slender as in *caribæus*; upper parts pale brown in about equal portions with the light olive gray edgings to feathers; under parts pale gray, washed on breast with dull cinnamon; axillars and flanks faded brown with rather broad white bars. Size of type: bill, 2.05; wing, 5.50; tarsus, 1.70 inches. *Habitat*.—Bahamas.

*Rallus crepitans* Gmel. Bill long, slender, compressed, and decurved; upper parts plumbeous gray, predominating over the brown or olive brown stripes; under parts have little rufous or cinnamon; axillars and

flanks dark gray, barred with white. Average size: bill, 2.34; wing, 5.75; tarsus, 1.90 inches. *Habitat*.—Atlantic and North Gulf Coasts; casually in Florida and Texas.

*Rallus crepitans saturatus Hensk.* Bill slender, compressed, and decurved; upper parts mostly rich brown edged with almost pure olive (in one instance with grayish olive); under parts dark gray with cinnamon breast. Average size: bill, 2.32; wing, 5.63; tarsus, 1.87 inches. *Habitat*.—Rigolets, close by Lake Pontchartrain, near New Orleans.

*Rallus obsoletus Ridg.* Bill long, slightly decurved, quite strong, and not compressed at base; color above grayish olive, sometimes olive, narrowly and sharply striped with very dark brown; under parts rich cinnamon; axillars and flanks grayish brown, barred with white. Average size: bill, 2.40; wing, 6.30; tarsus, 2.10 inches. *Habitat*.—Pacific Coast.

*Rallus scottii Senn.* Bill slender, decurved, and compressed; upper parts sooty brown or black edged slightly with olive gray; under parts dark ashy gray mixed more or less with cinnamon; axillars and flanks slate color, barred distinctly with white. Average size: bill, 2.32; wing, 5.60; tarsus, 1.85 inches. *Habitat*.—West Coast of Florida (Tarpon Springs and Charlotte Harbor).

#### COMMENT.

I think I have a greater number of specimens of this group of Rails than has heretofore been brought together, and I have spent much time during a year and a half past in studying and examining them. Boddaert's description of *longirostris* and Buffon's plate of the same agree with all the birds that have been received in England and the United States from the Atlantic Coast of South America, and do not apply to any other birds. The bill of *longirostris* differs not only in size but in shape from that of North American forms; instead of being compressed the lower mandible is broad and square where it joins the head, its greatest width being at the lower edge of the base. Moreover, it is very stout and straight, and notwithstanding its name, its bill is the shortest of any of the large Rails. Taking into account this peculiarly shaped bill, and also the color of the bird, I do not understand why Gmelin's New York *crepitans* should not at all times have been acknowledged as a distinct species.

I am indebted for generous loans of specimens to the National Museum, Washington; the American Museum, New York; Mr. W. E. D. Scott, Tarpon Springs, Fla.; Mr. H. W. Henshaw, Washington; Messrs. Salvin and Godman, London; Mr. Wm. Brewster, Cambridge; Mr. C. B. Cory, Boston; Dr. B. H. Warren, West Chester, Pa., to all of whom I express my sincere thanks.